

Richard Borden Manufacturing Company  
East corner intersection of Rodman  
Street and Plymouth Avenue  
Fall River  
Bristol County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-984

HABS  
MASS  
3-FALL  
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## RICHARD BORDEN MANUFACTURING COMPANY NO. 1 MILL

HABS  
MASS  
3-FALL  
6-

Location: East corner, intersection of Rodman Street and Plymouth Avenue, Fall River, Bristol County, Massachusetts.  
Geographic Location Code: 20 - 0320 - 005  
Latitude: 41° 41' 43" Longitude: 71° 09' 09"  
(Approximate location: East corner intersection of Rodman Street and Plymouth Avenue.)

Present Owner: Tremont Finance Company, 617 Industrial Bank Building, Providence, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Arlan's Retail Store, Advance Frocks Corp., Mervin Hat Co.

Present Use: Miscellaneous light manufacturing, sales and storage.

Statement of Significance: This building was considered one of the most efficiently designed textile mills of its time. It was one of the first large textile mills to have a shallow gable roof in preference to the traditional steeply pitched mill roofs and it also had a greater interior width than was common for the mills of the period in which it was built.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Built 1873.
2. Architect: Thomas J. Borden.
3. Original plan and construction: This building was one of the first large textile mill to have a shallow gable roof instead of the traditional steeply pitched mill roofs. It also had a greater interior width than was common for the mills of the period in which it was built.

## B. Sources of Information:

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Prepared by Robert M. Vogel and  
Ted Sande  
National Park Service  
July 25-26, 1968; July 1971

## PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: With the expanded four-aisle plan width and the very low pitched roof, the Richard Borden No. 1 Mill, erected in 1873, was considered to be one of the best structures for manufacturing purposes in this country at the time. Later more buildings were added, making a total of twelve, most of which are still standing.
2. Condition of fabric: Originally very well constructed, No. 1 Mill is today generally sound, but there is evidence of decay in the major wood beams and the roof and floor planking. The building is now poorly maintained, except the retail area on the first floor.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 93'-4" x 340'-0"; five stories with a five story ell (picker house). There are prominent stair towers at the northwest and southwest corners of the building.
2. Foundations: Foundations are mortared granite down to bedrock.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Exterior walls are of locally-quarried gray granite, 3'-4" (first) to

2'-2" (fifth) wall thicknesses. The end walls of the building and the towers are of neatly squared ashlar, hammered finish on the edges. The side walls are of irregular rubble with wide parged joints.

4. Structural system, framing: The interior framing consists of splined heavy structural plank floor (10" x 3"), on heavy wood beams (11" x 14" or 12" x 14"), supported by three rows of regularly-spaced cast iron columns (6-3/8" to 5-1/2" in diameter).

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: At the center of the Rodman Street facade are large doors (5' x 11') and a large overhanging beam for hoisting heavy equipment. These doors and the doors of the towers are topped with granite lintels. The large doors of the main building are six panelled, wood, with "X" braced removable railings.
- b. Windows and shutters: Typical window openings have granite lintels; double-hung wood sash, twelve lights each sash. Size of openings: 3'-8" wide, 9'-0" to 7'-6" high.

6. Roof: One of the first large mills in the city with a very low pitched roof rather than the traditional high pitched barn type roof. The roof is now covered with built-up composition gravel roofing.

The roof framing consists of heavy wood beams (9-1/2" x 13") supporting planking, quite similar to the typical floor construction.

The roof overhang is 4'-0" with boxed wood cornice and solid wood decorative brackets.

- C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The large rectangular floor space (89' x 336') on each of the six floors is undivided by partitions. The floors above are supported by three rows of regularly-spaced cast iron columns on each of the levels.
2. Stairways: The towers, at each end of the building, have a 5' square, hollow brick core around which the 5' wide wood stair winds, with six risers to each of the four segments; approximate dimensions: treads 12", risers 7-1/2". The highest level has open arches; the floor at that level is of built-up composition roofing.

3. Flooring: Flooring is 1" maple, 4" in width, laid over the structural planks throughout the mill.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The granite walls are plastered on the interior face. No boarding is applied to the underside of the floor planking. The heavy structural wood beams are exposed. The slender cast iron columns are smooth-shafted, tapered, and have moulded bases and caps.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Wood doors from the stair tower into the mill are six panelled.
  - b. Windows: The splayed jamb of the typical window is plastered; the sloping interior sill is painted brick. Windows on the first floor have been blocked up.
6. Mechanical equipment: Most areas are now lighted with fluorescent fixtures which have replaced the original gas fixtures.

Open steam pipe coils are used on the upper floors. In the retail store on the first floor air conditioning units have been installed. Upper floors have very limited toilet areas at the end corners of the building.

D. Site and Surroundings:

General setting and orientation: No. 1 Mill is prominently situated on the northeast side of Rodman Street at the intersection of Plymouth Avenue. The large end towers add to the building's stately appearance. Much of the area around the buildings is hard surfaced to provide parking for store customers and the employees of the shops in the various buildings.

Prepared by Melvin M. Rotsch  
Architect  
Texas A & M University  
August 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This building was recorded as part of the New England Textile Mill Survey II; which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings

Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service, and the Smithsonian Institution. The project was assisted by the Merrimack Valley Textile Museum, North Andover, Mass.; the Fall River Historical Society; and the Bristol Community College, Fall River, Mass. It was the second of two summer surveys whose purpose was to record representative examples of the buildings of the New England Textile industry.

The field work, historical research and record drawings were done in the summer of 1968 under the direction of Robert M. Vogel (Curator of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution), Project Director; Professor Melvin M. Rotsch (Architect, Texas A & M University), Project Supervisor; and David L. Bouse (University of Nebraska), Peter S. Conrad (Yale University), Eric DeLony (Ohio State University), and Dennis W. Jacobs (University of Kansas), Student Assistant Architects.

Historic documentation and editing of the project data were done in the summer of 1971 by Ted Sande (Architect, University of Pennsylvania), under the auspices of the Historic American Engineering Record of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service.